Collective Experiences in Recruitment and Hiring

1. Job Announcements/Advertising

a. The email system is bogging down with the myriad of uncontrolled messaging. Advertising job openings is one more contributor. The danger is that important information will be lost. There needs to be some organization to its use. Having to advertise openings is a symptom of an unmanaged hiring process. (Ralph Buell x7351)

b. If all job announcements went to a new job vacancy web site instead of each and every individual, this would serve at least two purposes: (1) the number of unnecessary emails would not be allowed to increase – a lot of time is wasted even if people just have to delete without reading, and (2) all the information on job openings can get people thinking about moving to a new job, and this subsequently creates turnover that may not have otherwise happened . . . . Even if the final result is good in terms of developing human resources for the organization, there may still be a loss to the organization due to an increase in temporarily vacant jobs. (Dave Chubon x2527)

c. Regarding DEU, our results have been disappointing. Advertising is needed for this to work. Many students I met at a recent UCD Career Fair had no knowledge of USAJOBS! I suggest that SPD coordinate continuous ads in ENR and ASCE magazines (and others), indicating the appropriate websites to go to for information and a personal point of contact (or website listing points of contact). Caltrans does this now in ASCE magazines monthly! (John Hess x7625)

d. The HQ Human Resources website on jobs needs updating and connection to all appropriate websites. (John Hess x7625)

e. I have control over how long announcements are advertised (15 days, 30 days, until filled, etc.) and get good advice from CPOC on DEU announcements. OPM seems to also do what we ask regarding how long they are advertised. (Roger Henderson x5378)

f. I have also gotten very good advice from CPOC on alternative sites on which we might consider listing vacancies. In some cases, they are expensive, but we are notified of this up front. However, it should be noted that of all the source I have used to advertise vacancies, I have to admit that I have gotten the most internal and external response just by the "heads up" vacancy splat announcements recently required by the COL. This has turned out to be a super idea . . . I am getting two to three calls per day from interested candidates. (Roger Henderson x5378)

g. The skill word issue has had somewhat less success. It really only applies to the generation of RESUMIX referral lists. My impression of the value of skill words is that they are of little use and do not actually produce a list of more qualified candidates. Whether the new RESUMIX system will result in meaningful lists has yet to be seen, but

I will let you know when our 30 upcoming recruitment actions begin to hit the system in March. (Roger Henderson x5378)

h. Announcements run through the CPOC DEU vacancy system are standard and generally are true to what we have wanted. Announcements through the OPM vacancy system are more troublesome. RESUMIX does not use announcements at all (a major flaw). (Roger Henderson x5378)

2. Job Applicants

a. . . . key to increasing your recruitment capabilities falls back to . . . increasing the number of applicants. From 5 years as a recruiting officer, I found that your best point of contact for applicants lies with the newly graduated engineers that have already joined the Corps. . . . new young engineers will seek out and assist your efforts by providing that one-on-one "buddy talk" with their friends that spreads the news and pushes those on the fence to join. This is not just my opinion, but a process that we found so successful that all of our goals were met during my entire tenure . . . . (Jim Austin x5345)

3. RESUMIX - Process

a. My experience is limited to RESUMIX. Key observations: 1. (I think) RESUMIX scans a resume until it makes 50 (?) matches from its key word file. After that, the skills do not count, so it is important to have a person's most important skills listed early in a document. 2. CPOC would not provide us with a list of key words that are used so some managers are compiling a list of words that are accepted/recognized during searches. A consolidation might be useful in order to understand the search criteria. 3. CPOC personnel were helpful in working searches, even doing them over the phone . . . . This phone technique will save days of review and email exchanges. You can either request the "raw" list and screen it yourself or ask CPOC to screen the applicants for interest in the position. 4. All of the selecting criteria are entered into the database search engine by use of "pick lists" of criteria. These can be varied easily and a new search made quickly so try a variety of search criteria in order to populate a list. 5. DEU searches require a Crediting Plan which must to provided by the selecting manager. The Crediting Plans on the internet are useful but likely will have to be modified. (Dail Hatch x6725)

4. RESUMIX – Weaknesses/Recommendations for Improvement

a. The old Open Announcement system was much better than RESUMIX. Before, folks applied for the jobs they wanted, when they wanted them, and with a resume tailored to that job. Now the visibility to openings is nil. One general announcement system, either hosted at the Army or OPM, should be a clearing house. Selections can then be restricted by agency, district, etc., if needed. (Pete Arpin x7067)

b. RESUMIX isn't even common across the entire Corps. There are multiple systems. (Pete Arpin x7067)

c. People outside of RESUMIX are excluded from consideration, at least on the first pass. The same is true of the special CP's. (Pete Arpin x7067)

d. With the new version, we need to see the actual list of skill words on the database. Not knowing the actual words compromises our attempts to guess what they are to request accurate RESUMIX lists. We also need to be able to add words to that list. (John Hess x7625)

e. I have to admit that I have not had a great deal of success with the RESUMIX referral system . . . . I see the following problems (based on my own experience):

1. The RESUMIX system is unfair to those Federal employees looking for advancement or laterals. For one thing, they are unaware of vacancies sometimes within their own District or Division and certainly unaware of vacancies in Districts/Divisions not served by their CPOC since no vacancy announcements are ever distributed. If no DEU or OPM announcement is made, no one knows what is available.

2. RESUMIX candidates are required to input their experience, skills, etc., into a very limiting format in hopes of containing key words. If you have the wrong format or put your experience in the wrong place, you risk not being short listed. In addition, candidates who are interested in slightly different positions within their own discipline have no opportunity to revise their resume for a specific vacancy.

3. Hiring supervisors who receive a RESUMIX referral list generally experience one or more of the following situations: the candidate is not interested due to location, pay, or job type; the candidate has already received a higher grade but never got around to updating the resume; or the candidate does not meet the qualifications. The only way to find this out is to interview most if not all the candidates. This is a time-consuming process. If you only have to hire one or two folks a year, this is acceptable. If you are hiring 5 to 10, it becomes a major issue.

4. Candidates on the RESUMIX referral lists are not required to submit answers to KSA's. Thus, I cannot readily tell much about a candidate's writing skills (often one of our KSA's) from the RESUMIX resume due to its unusual format (no complete sentences, buzz words, truncations, etc.). This puts the hiring supervisor and the candidate at a distinct disadvantage. The candidate has no opportunity to demonstrate or provide more information on what the supervisor is looking for and supervisor is lacking valuable information regarding a candidate's experience. (Roger Henderson x5378)

5. KSA's

a. Regarding KSA's for DEU, dispense with the need for separate job analyses if it is already part of the crediting plan. One CPOC person said the regulation required

separate documents. I am skeptical whether the regulation actually says that two documents are needed. A job analysis should be just a tool to get to a crediting plan, buy why require it? This just takes more time. (John Hess x7625)

b. Over the last few weeks, both Rick Meagher and I have been developing many KSA's (crediting plans) as well as job analyses. In many cases we have little to go on other than general guidance or examples from other crediting plans for different positions/disciplines. The WCPOC has a regional database of crediting plans, but it currently does not contain many in the environmental engineering field. Unfortunately, the WCPOC does not have access to other CPOC crediting plans which would be of big help to us all. Why is there no centralized database for this? Note that the database also contains no examples of job analyses which are used in developing the crediting plan (and KSA's). (Roger Henderson x5378).

6. OPM

a. For a while, OPM was the only "game in town" if we wanted to reach outside the Federal Government for candidates. However, with the advent of the DEU process and the fact that OPM also lists our DEU announcements on their website, there is no reason to spend the $800+ to have them rewrite your announcement and list it. Their application process is very time consuming for applicants as opposed to the DEU process. In addition, we have recently had some major issues with a recruitment action. One problem in working via OPM is communication – in theory we are supposed to communicate with OPM via our CPAC who in turn calls our CPOC who then in turn calls the OPM staffer working on your action. Miscommunication seems to result. It is not a process I'd recommend pursuing at this time. (Roger Henderson x5378)

7. CPAC/CPOC

a. I have actually had quite good success with CPOC once I could get it there. The 1102 requests are fairly straightforward, and I normally get a good list of applicants. (Ruth Ijames x5201)

b. My impression is that the CPAC's and CPOC's (at least the WCPOC) are understaffed and struggling to keep up with the flood of recruitment actions coming their way. Points of contact are routinely moved from support of one organization (e.g., SPK Engineering Division) to another. As a result, some recruitment actions become stalled or fall through the cracks as a new staffer comes up to speed. Everyone is frustrated with the system. The CPOC folks are friendly and helpful, but simply overworked. I've experienced the feeling. It seems that a return to the past where the Human Resources elements had more recruitment authorities would benefit the whole organization. (Roger Henderson x5378)

8. Hiring

a. The time to fill vacancies is unacceptable. Between an announcement and a selection, months may pass. Will good people actively seeking a new position be available for months? I personally was hired 6 months after applying for my position. I had already accepted a different position and was very skeptical of an agency that would follow up so slowly. I took the initiative to visit the Corps and IM before accepting the offer. I liked what I saw and accepted, but if I had recently moved or was unable to visit, I would have turned the position down. (Peter Arpin x????)

b. The lack of feedback from Human Resources to candidates leaves an impression of futility. Human Resources should confirm the receipt of an application. They should immediately inform the candidate if they are minimally qualified or if the application cannot be accepted. When a selection is made, notification should be sent to all qualified candidates. If this does not happen, good candidates give up on an agency. (Peter Arpin x????)

c. Quality of selections has direct effect on morale and retention attitudes of current staff. If a new hire is knowledgeable and a team play player, then everyone sees success in the company policies. (Ralph Buell x7351)

d. Every effort must be made to decentralize the recruitment and selection of interns and to allow acceptance of regular resumes versus forcing students to do the RESUMIX resume and process. I understand that some sort of arrangement has been made to allow "on the spot" offers to students at a recruitment fair in Washington DC tied into Black History Month. This type of approach needs to be made the standard!! (Randy Redeen x6616)

e. We need to develop a more organized COOP program. Such positions allow for conversion to permanent positions non-competitively for both permanent and intern entry level positions. (Randy Redeen x6616)

f. . . . Recruitment and relocation bonuses are one time payments that have been paid out of overhead accounts by those Districts that have used them. No one, to my knowledge, has found a way to charge them to project-specific accounts. Retention bonuses are a little different in that they are additional salary monies, paid out over a period of time, as a percentage added to the employee's salary. This allows them to be charged as the employee would charge his/her time normally whether it is overhead or project specific. . . . BG Madsen now has the authority to approve retention bonus requests. This authority was previously held at HQ. The Division Commander has always had the authority to approve recruitment and relocation bonuses. (Pat Andrews x7499)

9. Retention

a. A mentor should be assigned to new employees until they are up to full performance levels. This assigns the responsibility of making a new employee

productive to one individual. My experience is that the first year or two of a career is critical and has the highest probability of turnover. (Peter Arpin x????)

b. The staff still sees little reward for loyalty to the District. Instead, rewards appear to go to those loyal to their career and Corps. That means those who align their personal lives with the company's desire for a mobile work force get the raises and move on. (Ralph Buell x7351)

c. The District's liberal work hour policy and vast array of projects are huge pluses. However, as long-term family goals set in, we have a tougher time keeping the mature engineers when other local governments pay so much better. We cannot survive on young, untrained talent fresh out of college. We will probably need to have strategies in place to negotiate higher starting salaries to attract experienced people out the private sector. (Ralph Buell x7351)

10. Time Savers/Helpful Hints

a. What would be helpful would be a list of important contacts and telephone numbers to cut down on the search time to connect with the right individual. (Dan Kelly x7115)

b. I have experienced a great times saving after a new staffing specialist was assigned to me. I get the list within about 2 weeks, and I work hard to meet the suspense for returning the list. (Ruth Ijames x5201)

c. . . . anytime you have a vacancy, you need to talk to HR as soon as possible and keep communications open regarding what/how to fill. (Patsy Hopkins x7015)

d. Keeping databases of recruitment packages (PD + job analysis + crediting plan + mandatory/optional skills words) can speed up our end of the process. Offering to help the CPOC as much as possible is a plus, but in some cases simply calling and emailing often is the last (but least pleasant) resort. (Roger Henderson x5378)

e. Other advice for hiring supervisors: with as many new actions and hiring going on, it is wise to develop standardized interview sheets for each candidate interviewed either by phone or in person. Based on what I write down on these sheets during the interview, I prepare a "selection memo" for each hiring action which details why a candidate was selected and why others were not. It will help defend your decision if a candidate disputes your selection. You will be responsible for defending your choice. Neither the CPAC nor CPOC will do it for you. (Roger Henderson x5378)

11. Expertise in HR Issues

a. We have received "same day" service to extend some of our term positions from both Jill Hansen (in the absence of Linda Petersen) at the local OPM Sacramento Service Center, 498-6497, and Linda Petersen, Director, OPM San Francisco Service Center, (415) 281-7094. Both are professionals who are extremely willing to help. I would not

hesitate to contact them if they could assist in recruiting or other personnel actions. (Dan Kelly x7115)

   b. Kathy Sawyer coordinates all ED personnel actions and does an outstanding job. The branches forward an email with the PD, RESUMIX/DEU action, skill words, and appropriation to Kathy. She develops an email announcement for the District and starts the FPI action. A real time saver for Section and Branch Chiefs and highly effective. (John Hess x7625)

   c. I give great credit to my Branch Chief, Sheri Bone, for showing us the ropes and also showing us how we can accelerate recruitment actions through the system. She should be noted as one of the non-Human Resources individuals who is highly knowledgeable and effective in many Human Resources matters. She is not afraid to ask questions and is commendably tenacious! (Roger Henderson x5378)